

Anonymous (1812)
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Extract of a letter from a gentleman on a visit to Beaufort, South Carolina, to his friend in Philadelphia, dated on the 11th of February, 1812.

"Since I have been here I have been witness to the most alarming occurrences. Frequent shocks of an earthquake have been felt, of which you no doubt have heard. Last Friday we experienced one much more severe than any yet felt. It happened about four in the morning. I was lying awake in my bed, when I began to feel my bed shake, but being witness to so many, I was not at first much alarmed. The house began to shake more and more. I leaped from bed in fear lest the house should fall, and in running across the room I staggered like one very much intoxicated. The house shook so much that I was forced to support myself by holding fast to the casement of the door of my room. It continued for four or five minutes. I can only compare the motion to that of a ship at sea. The wall of our house was cracked in several places in consequence of it. The people here are very much alarmed, and the civil power have appointed a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer that the evil which seems to await us may be averted. From the looks of the weather today, I am afraid we shall have another, but I pray God, that we may not be injured by it. You cannot imagine my feelings on the occasion. I feel a constant dread of being buried in the ruin of the houses, or swallowed up by the earth."